



**CoreStand™**  
**presents**

# **BECOMING A CORE NINJA**



**Mastering the  
Common Core Standards**

Copyright © 2010 by Rich Clark and the Team at CoreStand.  
Visit us at <http://corestand.com>

The copyright holders are licensing this under the Creative Commons License, Attribution 3.0. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/us>

For more information, email us at [team@corestand.com](mailto:team@corestand.com)

A very special thanks to Digital Marketing Specialist (we refer to him as “Sensei”) Bryan Sattler of Sticky Media Labs, LLC. Visit him at <http://stickymedialabs.com>

All information presented in this work is for reference only. This work is provided as-is and with all faults, and the publisher makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express, implied, or otherwise, including, without limitation, warranties of title, merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, non-infringement, accuracy, or the presence or absence of errors, whether or not discoverable.

The Common Core Standards Copyright 2010 © National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.

Brain Feed, Inc. and CoreStand™ are not endorsed by nor affiliated with NGA/CCSSO. CoreStand™ and the CoreStand™ logo are properties of Brain Feed, Inc. All rights reserved.

**Please pass this book along to someone you’d like to inspire to become a Core Ninja!**

***Becoming a Core Ninja: Mastering the Common Core Standards*** created by CoreStand: [www.corestand.com](http://www.corestand.com).  
For information regarding CoreStand’s School Share Program, workshops, and other consulting services, please email us at [team@corestand.com](mailto:team@corestand.com)

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: New Standards, New Challenges</b>	<b>5</b>
Looking the Standards in the Eye	8
<b>Chapter 2: Creating a C.O.R.E. Classroom</b>	<b>11</b>
C.O.R.E. Element #1: Current	12
C.O.R.E. Element #2: Obtainable	14
C.O.R.E. Element #3: Rigorous	16
C.O.R.E. Element #4: Exemplar-Based	17
<b>Chapter 3: C.O.R.E. Classrooms in Practice</b>	<b>19</b>
Featured Sample #1	20
Featured Sample #2	24
Featured Sample #3	27
Featured Sample #4	31



## CHAPTER 1

# New Standards, New Challenges

*The ancient story goes like this: two people are lost in the desert. Dying from hunger and thirst, they suddenly come upon a high wall. On the other side they can hear the sound of a waterfall and birds singing. Above, they can see the branches of a lush fruit tree extending over the top of the wall. One of them manages to climb over the wall and disappears down the other side. The other, instead, returns to the desert to help other lost travelers find their way to the oasis.*

Those of us facing down the Common Core Standards may feel, well, a little bit like one of those lost travelers in the desert. After all, this is the first time we've had a majority of states sign on to a common set of standards. And while we've faced No Child Left Behind and we've aligned our curriculum to our individual state standards, the truth is, in a matter of time, part of our evaluations will be based on how well our students master the Core Standards.

At this point, you may be experiencing one of two very common, but certainly not mutually exclusive, sets of reactions:

1. **Resignation.** More common among veteran teachers, this is the "I'll just shut my door and hope it goes away" response. Movements come and go, you think, and this one will, too. Those experiencing this reaction may exhibit the following behaviors, especially in meetings: skeptical eyebrow raising, arm crossing, and silence. The drinking of exceptional amounts of coffee is not uncommon with this reaction.

2. **Fear.** Common especially among younger and untenured teachers, this is the “I’ll just do whatever I’m told” response. These standards are freaking me out, you think, but I don’t want anyone to know. Symptoms include, but are not limited to, nervous smiling, fidgeting, and unblinking eyes (a.k.a., assuming a “deer in the headlights” look). Stealth texting, especially in meetings, often accompanies this reaction.

We hope to convince you that, while both of the above responses to a national set of standards are quite common, there is a **third path** available to us.

We could **look** the standards in the eye. We could **study** them with intense precision. We could **infiltrate** the conversation about *benchmarks* and *assessments* and *exemplar texts* **armed** with lesson plans, games, and activities that reflect our passions and strengths.

In other words, we could approach the standards like a **ninja**.

# The purpose of this book is to teach you how.



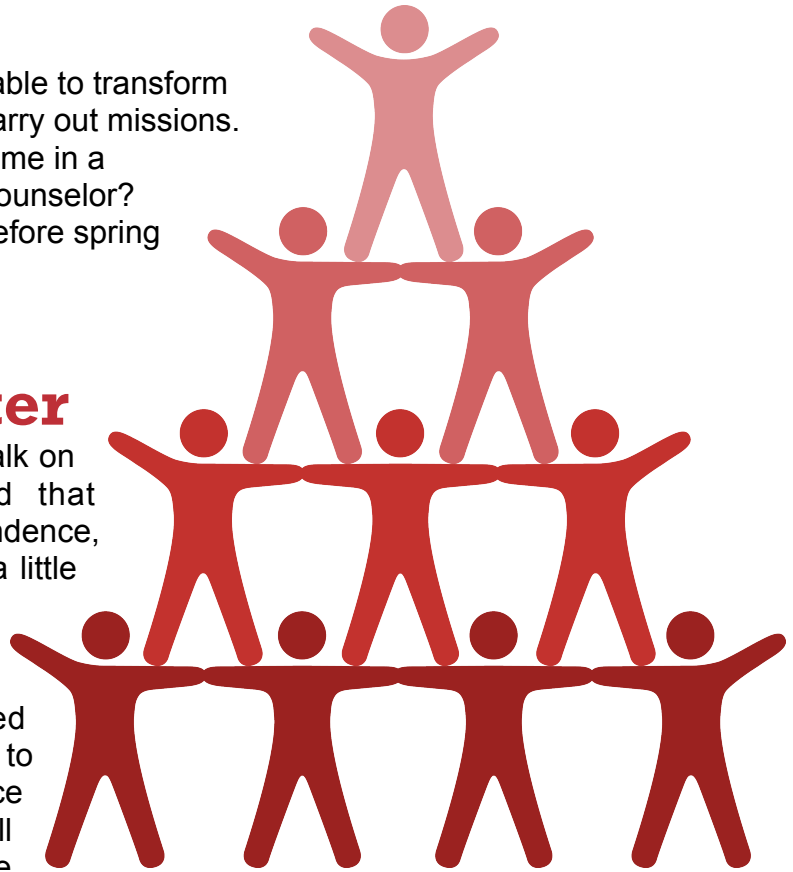
Think you don't have anything in common with the Ninja? Consider just three of the Ninja's most legendary superpowers:

## Shape Shifting

Ninjas, according to legend, were able to transform themselves into animals in order to carry out missions. Consider the many forms you assume in a given day, or even class period: Counselor? Editor? Comedian? (Or, the day before spring break: Zookeeper?).

## Walking On Water

While teachers may not literally walk on water, who hasn't experienced that moment in a classroom of transcendence, where everything becomes, well, a little bit magical? Maybe the lightbulb goes on for a whole class of struggling to understand negative numbers. Maybe you've created "psychedelic milk" in a science lab to demonstrate the concept of surface tension. The point is, kids are still talking about your class out in the hall. You, like a ninja, have become a little bit legendary.



## Invisibility

Here's a secret: sometimes good teachers disappear. We don't mean they sneak out of class for that cup of Starbucks; instead, they create a learner-driven environment where kids are such active, responsible participants in their learning, they nearly forget the teacher is even there.

# Looking the Standards In the Eye

## Seven Points To Consider

### **1 Not all subjects are covered by the Core Standards (yet).**

Currently, standards are in place for English/Language Arts, grades K-12, and Math, grades K-12. There are also specific literacy standards in place for History, Science, Social Science and Technical Subjects, grades 6-12. (To see the Standards listed by grade and subject area, please visit <http://corestand.com>). More specific standards for science and other subjects will be developed in the future. Additionally, there likely will be ongoing revisions for the current Common Core State standards.

**Key Question #1:**  
How will you stay informed as changes occur in the Common Core Standards?

### **2 Promoting literacy skills is a major focus of the Core Standards.**

While there are required types of texts students in English are expected to read (i.e., Shakespeare, classic myths, informational texts, etc.), the focus in English/Language Arts is on building reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. In the same vein, History, Science, and Technical Subject teachers are free to choose whatever content they and/or their principals and states see fit, but are expected to use the literacy standards to teach that content. In addition, the Standards require an increased emphasis on informational texts across all disciplines. Finally, a majority of tasks and questions must be “text dependent”—that is, involving close reading and text-based analysis (where careful scrutiny of the text is necessary).

**Key Question #2:**  
Is reading and writing actively promoted in your classroom?

### **3 Even so, there is not a required reading list.**

However, an extensive list of “Exemplar Texts” has been provided and matched to grade level and subject area. In history or science, exemplar texts ranging from Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” to featured articles from *National Geographic* have been assigned grade-appropriate spots.

**Key Question #3:**  
Which of the exemplar texts would easily fit into your curriculum?



## **4 The standards are designed to promote both college and career readiness.**

For example, in high school Mathematics, there is significant emphasis on applying mathematical concepts to real-world situations.

### **Key Question #4:**

Do your assignments serve the needs of both college-bound students and work-bound students?

## **5 There's a Fourth "R".**

That's right. Research. Recognizing that the need to effectively engage with the digital world is paramount to today's students, the Core Standards promote research skills in all areas of literacy: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Teachers of History, Science, Social Science and Technical Subjects, grades 6-12, are expected to integrate research skills into their curriculum as well. By the end of high school, students should be engaging in both short and long-term research projects requiring them to synthesize information from a variety of sources.

### **Key Question #5:**

Are you comfortable teaching—not simply requiring—research skills in your classroom?

## **6 ELL students and students with disabilities will receive curriculum aligned to the Common Core Standards.**

Teachers and support personnel will be expected to provide appropriate instructional accommodations for these students. Creating a culture of rigorous expectation for all students is a goal of the Common Core State Standards.

### **Key Question #6:**

What are some strategies you can use to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners while maintaining the rigor of your classroom?

## **7 States will determine how the Core Standards will be assessed.**

Nearly all states are already at work creating assessments and are planning to complete this process by 2014. Assessments will likely vary from state to state, though states have banded together in the creation of assessments aligned to the standards, forming two groups: The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium and The Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). In addition to standardized tests, there may be some performance-based type of assessments as well, depending upon the state.

### **Key Question #7:**

How will you prepare your students for new assessments, while maintaining a classroom that is reflective of your strengths and passions?

*Becoming a Core Ninja: Mastering the Common Core Standards* created by CoreStand: [www.corestand.com](http://www.corestand.com).  
For information regarding CoreStand's School Share Program, workshops, and other consulting services, please email us at [team@corestand.com](mailto:team@corestand.com)

**In many ways, Key Question #7 is the most important.**

Standards movements can feel pretty threatening to the individual classroom teacher. All the more reason to consider how you can create, find, and share materials that not only connect to the Core Standards, but also connect to your own core principles. Because once you've found a way to put your personal stamp on a rigorous aligned curriculum, you will truly have mastered the Common Core Standards.



## **see the forest for the trees**

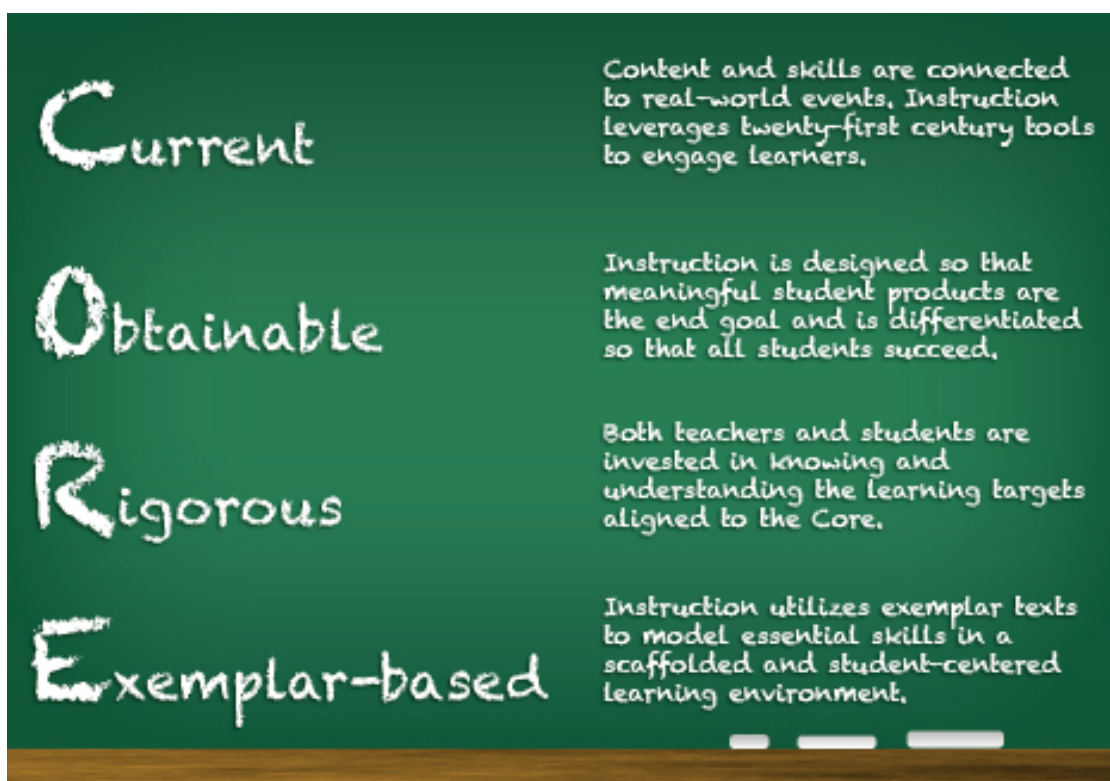
No matter what standards our instructional materials are aligned to, **good teaching is good teaching**. A master sage is a master sage in any context. It's about being able to see the forest for the trees.

A Core Ninja recognizes the value of a nation-wide movement like the Common Core Initiative. Widely-adopted standards can act as a set of essential guideposts for educators as they create and refine curriculum. But these guideposts are meaningless without a guide—that is, without an expert teacher who knows how to package and pitch a learning experience, to seamlessly “connect the dots” for students. And while the tools of an actual ninja may include a katana, grappling hooks, a blow gun, or throwing stars, a Core Ninja wields chalk, a computer, and, most importantly, **an essential understanding of the fundamentals of effective teaching in the twenty-first century**.

## CHAPTER 2

# Creating a C.O.R.E. Classroom

Hopefully at some point, you've been in that master teacher's classroom where you were so engaged and pushed that time seemed to disappear. We've observed teachers for many years, and while we've haven't ever seen one pull a rabbit out of hat, we've encountered those who know how to make learning feel magical. They aligned their curriculum to standards, but also went above and beyond. They created student-centered learning environments. And to reach and inspire students in today's world, they built what we at CoreStand call **C.O.R.E.** classrooms, where instructional materials are **Current, Obtainable, Rigorous, and Exemplar-based**.



# C.O.R.E. Element #1: **Current**

## *Why are we learning this?*

That's the question teachers hear all the time. And most of us have a sort of default response that goes something like this: "Because it's going to be on the test/because it's part of the district goals/because someday you'll thank me," etc. But the truth is, the next time a student asks this question, you could simply say, "thanks".

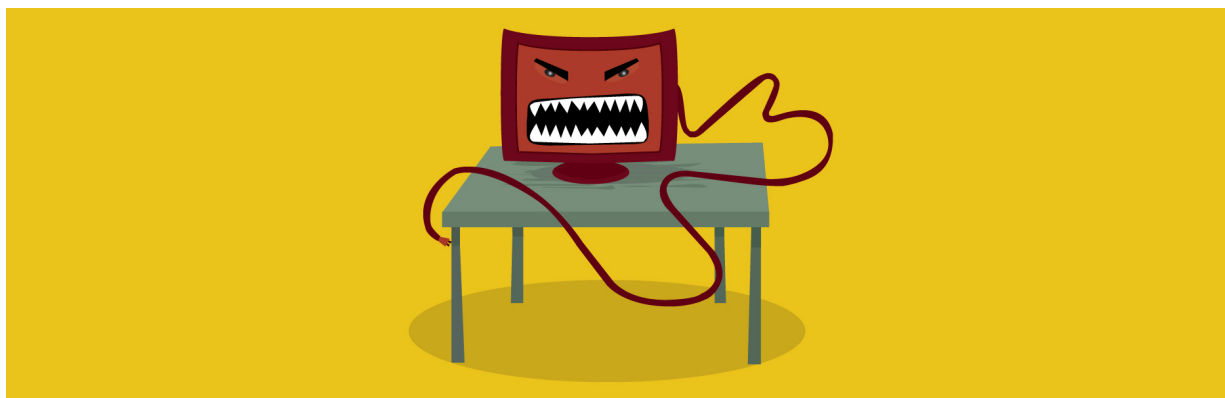
Why?

Because that student has just given you a very valuable piece of information. That student has just told you that you need to do a better job of connecting the dots between the curriculum and the real world. Really, what that student is asking is for you to make him care.

Of course, that's easier said than done. Consider what we're up against. A recent article in the New York Times, "Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction", cut right to the chase. It was hard not to wince reading example after example of our hyper-connected-and disconnected-kids: one girl sends or receives 27,000 texts per month; another boy stays up all night updating his Facebook pages.

Let's face it. Our kids are plugged in. The question is, as educators, what do we do about it?

Our suggestion?



# Make peace with the Beast.

The beast being computers. And YouTube. And Twitter. And whatever else will come along, to snag our kids' attention away from school.

Does that mean you've got to have a computer on every desk, an iPod in every ear? Certainly not. There's lots of talk out there by corporate execs who might lead you to believe otherwise. But the truth is, computers are, quite simply, not teachers. They don't know when a kindergartner needs his nose wiped or a high school kid needs to see the social worker. They're not good at figuring out why that one kid in the hoodie never seems to raise his hand.

Still, they've got a lot to offer the classroom teacher and it's our job to make friends with the beast that is technology so we can better connect with our kids.

How to do that? Start by enlisting the help of the experts. The experts being, of course, your kids. Our kids are natural born web-surfers, so let them do the work for you. Say you're studying formal argumentation and you want kids to understand how important it is not to engage in ad hominem attacks, which are attacks on a person's character, instead of a person's argument. Why not have the kids bring in clips of politicians who do just that—engage in personal attacks?

Consider using Facebook for homework purposes, too. If your kids are old enough, don't lose the opportunity to turn Facebook into an active reading activity. Kids could scan posts for grammatical errors studied in class (of course, that would probably keep them up all night!). Or try having them set up a Facebook page for the original outsider Holden Caulfield, narrator of *Catcher in the Rye*. Or better yet, they might turn Facebook into an opportunity to survey classmates on something you're studying in class: say, the right to bear arms or stem cell research.

YouTube offers another great way to connect with our kids on a digital level. Teach them to actively process that video in front of them. Instead of simply watching that crazy clip of the little baby throwing a tantrum at the mall, hand out a worksheet that asks kids to reflect on why that video is so popular in the first place. How many of us are watching it? Are we laughing at it? Why? Does this video speak to some larger conflicts we may need to confront: parenting, materialism, voyeurism? And, for good measure, what would some of the authors of the exemplar texts, such as Thoreau or John Steinbeck, say?

Remember: the way of the Ninja is to infiltrate forbidden places. So, while you can't actually see what your students are writing on their Facebook wall, you can gain a little access to their world by connecting it to a homework assignment.

## C.O.R.E. Element #2: Obtainable

*The Mahabharata*, an ancient Hindu epic, tells us, among other things, of the story of the great warrior Arjuna. A masterful archer, Arjuna's skills in battle derive from his powers of focus and concentration. A well-known story exemplifies this:

The guru Drona constructed a lesson for his students testing their ability to wield a bow. After hanging a wooden bird from a branch of a tree in the distance, he returned and asked the first student to take aim at the eye of the bird. When the student had done so, he asked, "Tell me: what do you see?" The student replied that he saw the bird, the tree, the field, and the sky. Drona said, "Do not shoot." He repeated this process with a few other students, who all responded as the first student did. Yet, when he asked Arjuna what he saw, Arjuna told his guru that the only thing he could see was the eye of the bird. Satisfied, Drona told Arjuna to release the arrow. Doing so, Arjuna struck the target perfectly.

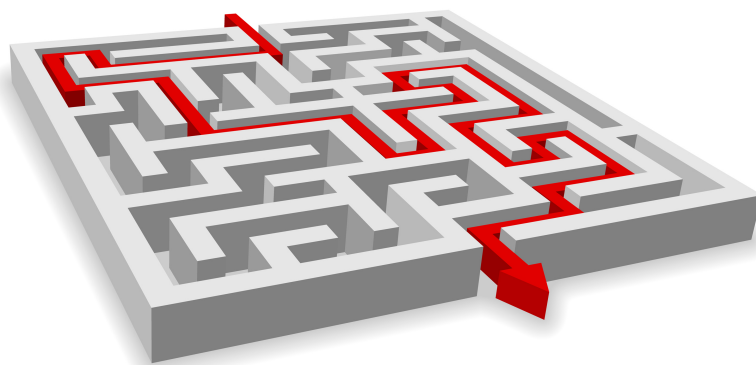
While your principal may not require you to wield a long bow in the classroom, he or she will almost certainly require that you design and implement curriculum with clarity and purpose. There's a lesson here. The warrior Arjuna struck the target because he was so clearly focused on his goal. For classroom teachers, that means being methodical and thoughtful when "connecting the dots"—that is, making learning obtainable for all students.

Master teachers make the learning process so seamless and user-friendly that students internalize the content and skills sometimes without even knowing it. It's a bit ironic—when a teacher provides a seamless environment where high-level skills are modeled, practiced, refined, and then synthesized, kids often leave feeling as if the class wasn't that difficult.

You may be thinking, *but how do they do it?*

Actually, making rigorous learning targets obtainable isn't as difficult as you'd might expect.

Most learning targets fall into one of two categories: content and skills (though in mathematics, it's often solely skills-based). What's exciting about the Common Core Standards is that they have been structured in a way that's friendly to both. Take literacy, for example. The creators of the Core Standards draw a clear distinction between what's involved with reading literature versus reading an informational text, and have modified the essential skills accordingly. Thus, using the standards themselves as learning targets will help you maintain focus and clarity as you plan your instruction.



# Think Forward, Plan Backward

But how to make these learning targets obtainable for all students? When planning any unit of study, try this approach:

The warrior Arjuna clearly understood his end goal, and succeeded as a result. For a teacher, a big part of understanding the end goal is understanding the unique strengths and weaknesses of each of your students. Only then can a teacher build **differentiation** into classroom activities—that is, modifying certain aspects of instruction tailored to specific student needs, such as incorporating additional practice activities, partnering stronger students with those that struggle, offering exemplar texts of varying difficulty, and building in one-on-one instruction into the school day. Consider using a pre-assessment of some kind to familiarize yourself with each student's strengths and weaknesses so you will best know how to plan a successful unit of study.

A meaningful unit of study has an end goal that's obtainable, most likely in the form of a student product—from an essay or test response to a lab write-up or presentation. Thinking forward and planning backward makes you reconsider these end goals actually as **starting points** when designing lessons. Ask yourself:

1. What is it I want my students to be able to produce?
2. What content and skills will be embedded in this product?
3. How will I assess the targeted content and skills?
4. How will I make students aware of the targeted content and skills?
5. How will I scaffold instruction of the targeted content and skills?
6. How will students practice the targeted skills and be gradually exposed to the content?
7. How will I build differentiation into my activities to meet the unique and diverse needs of individual students?



## C.O.R.E. Element #3: Rigorous

We can all lament the amount of time our students are spending in front of video games. In 2009, kids between the ages of eight and eighteen spent on average 1 1/4 hours a day playing them, up from about twenty-five minutes in 1999. We can begrudge having our homework assignments compete (or at least try to) with the latest Call of Duty or Madden game.

Or, we can try to learn from them—specifically, from how they are structured.

Creators of such products spend countless dollars paying gamers to test their latest venture. To be worthy of purchase, a game must offer problems that challenge a user but provide payoffs, as well. The most effective models reward users incrementally while increasing the level of difficulty as the game progresses. For example, by destroying a monster, a character receives a more powerful weapon, one she will need in order to challenge the next (more powerful) enemy. Market research shows that, when gamers feel a game is too difficult or, even worse, the difficulty stems from the nature of the game's design—that is, they know what they want their character to do but can't figure out how to do it—the game will flop.

There's a lesson here. In the classroom, when students don't feel challenged, they don't perform to the best of their abilities. This is the this-class-is-so-easy-so-why-do-I-have-a-B curse. Likewise, if they feel the "rules of the game" (in this case, the learning targets) are a hidden mystery, it will just increase their level of frustration.

The solution, then, is twofold.

First, a master teacher knows how important it is to keep the student at the center of the learning process. Thus, in the ideal classroom, internalizing the standards is a shared responsibility for both teacher and student. This means that students have an active knowledge and understanding of the standards. In other words, they can clearly see the path ahead of themselves. Once again, metacognition—in the form of rubrics, self-assessments, regular reflections, learning portfolios, etc.—plays a key role here.

Second, a master teacher makes the process of internalizing the standards smooth and efficient by creating learning experiences

**Becoming a Core Ninja:** Mastering the Common Core Standards created by CoreStand: [www.corestand.com](http://www.corestand.com). For information regarding CoreStand's School Share Program, workshops, and other consulting services, please email us at [team@corestand.com](mailto:team@corestand.com)

**Fact:** Total media exposure for teens averages ten hours and forty-five minutes a day, as opposed to seven and a half hours ten years ago.

**Fact:** Forty one percent of American households own a current generation game console (like PS3 or XBox 360).



that are targeted, sequential, and incremental. Luckily for us, the creators of the Common Core Standards took this into account when organizing and delineating the skill bands from level to level. As you will soon learn (if you haven't begun to already), they are, in fact, quite cohesive. What's more, included with the standards are specific examples of how each may be employed in the classroom.

## **C.O.R.E. Element #4: Exemplar-Based**

Recall the infamous scene from the classic John Hughes film, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Monotone voiced teacher takes attendance in a room full of sleeping students, their cheeks resting in puddles of drool. "Bueller? Bueller?" he calls out. But Ferris Bueller's cruising down Lake Shore Drive in a red convertible with a couple of his friends.

For teachers, the irony of this scene is that Ferris and co. eventually land themselves at the Art Institute at one point and end up having more of an educational experience than their classmates trapped in desks at school. The point is, there's some pretty solid evidence that even slackers like Ferris Bueller like to learn.

Don't believe us?

Have you ever watched ten-year-olds learn to skateboard?

They spend hours perfecting one trick—the ollie off the curb. They mostly fail at it. Then one time, they hit it. Then another. They seem satisfied. Until the next day, that is. They've studied the older kids at the park. Or maybe they've watched a cool video on YouTube. Their goal has changed. Now they want to kickflip. Lather, rinse, repeat.

If we want our students to be similarly primed for learning, we could learn a thing or two from our skateboarders. That is, kids learn best when they're motivated. And what motivates kids? Models. Specifically, Supermodels.

Supermodels in the classroom? Sounds pretty distracting, right? Especially around prom, if you're teaching a class full of seniors. But good teachers understand the power of using good models in the classroom.

However, just being in the presence of effective models or, as we like to call them, exemplars, isn't enough. Students need to actively engage the exemplar in a purposeful manner and be made to feel confident that (just like the supermodel above) the targeted skills and concepts aren't "out of their league". The exemplar (whatever it is) was probably created by a professional, and if we want our students mimicking the pros, we have to demystify this process for them.

The following approach does just that. By tapping into the powerful tool of metacognition, the teacher guides students to first recognize what makes the exemplar effective and worthy of imitating. Next, students must process these strengths as learning targets. Then, students engage in guided practice with the various concepts and skills associated with the learning targets in a low-stakes environment. Once they've mastered the concepts and skills, they create products themselves and, finally, metacognitively evaluate the learning process.



**Demonstrate.** Provide effective, real-world exemplars of the learning targets being employed. For an ninth grade English teacher, this means providing a sample essay (whether student- or professionally- generated) that demonstrates some effective components of argumentation. For a fifth grade math teacher, this means showing students sample bridges constructed out of popsicle sticks that demonstrate how various shapes can be incorporated into the design to support a load.



**Process.** Have students identify the relevant learning targets being employed and meta-cognitively discuss (in written form or orally) how these elements function within the model. The ninth-grade English teacher may ask his students to annotate the article for the argumentation components. The fifth-grade math teacher may ask her students to identify the geometric structures used and to make predictions about which model will hold the most weight.

**Practice.** Break the learning targets into chunkable skills and concepts and have students practice them repeatedly and in multiple ways. Thus, the student in English is required to devise extended examples of an assigned topic sentence or the math student must test out the strength of each shape using toothpicks and glue.



**Create.** Direct students to create meaningful original products demonstrating the learning targets. Our ninth grader, then, will be busy writing an original argument and our fifth grader will construct a popsicle bridge designed using a repeated shape of her choice.

**Evaluate.** Direct students to, once again, metacognitively evaluate their learning. Thus, each student may fill out a rubric and provide additional reflection on the unit of study.

## CHAPTER 3

# C.O.R.E. Classrooms in Practice

Just as students learn best by mimicking effective models, we, too, as teachers, do likewise. In this final chapter, we're showcasing four samples of instructional materials that effectively demonstrate what the C.O.R.E. principles look like in practice.

Each instructional material is preceded by an explanation of the targeted Core Standards as well as a brief snapshot of each publisher's unique approach. Our goal is to showcase how each publisher has not only aligned their work with the Common Core Standards, but has also thoughtfully designed activities to maximize student engagement and skill mastery using the four C.O.R.E. principles.

Each lesson or unit was designed by a CoreStand publisher or publishing team. To see more of their work, please visit <http://corestand.com>.

# Featured Sample #1

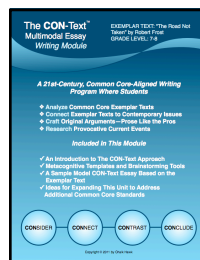
## Featured Publisher: Chalk Hawk

Chalk Hawk has been teaching for over a decade. His lessons seek to connect curriculum with current events, and he works hard to utilize technology to engage and inspire students. Chalk Hawk creates a wide range of instructional materials, including his writing “modules”, as he calls them, based on his signature “CON-Text” approach, which helps students of all ages write sophisticated essays connecting classroom texts to the world around them. What makes Chalk Hawk’s work so effective, however, is that he understands how important metacognition is to authentic learning and how crucial it is to both model and scaffold skills for students.



## Featured Material: The CON-Text Multimodal Essay Writing Module—Frost’s “The Road Not Taken”

What follows are three components of a larger unit based on a writing approach Chalk Hawk invented called the **CON-Text Approach**. Treating a classroom text as a springboard for an original persuasive essay, the **CON-Text Approach** offers students an easy-to-follow formula to organize their writing (and thinking): **CON**sider, **CON**nect, **CON**trast, and **CON**clude. Chalk Hawk designs his units using Core Exemplar Texts, especially useful to teachers seeking to connect curriculum to the Core Initiative. Here, for example, Chalk Hawk’s unit is centered on Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken”, signifying a whole language approach to literacy that is both aligned and engaging. What’s more, included in each unit is a sample essay specific to the exemplar text and written in a style that’s grade appropriate (in this case, for middle school).



## Core Standards Alignment

**Instructional Material Type:**  
Unit Plan

**Subject & Target Grade:**  
E/LA, 7-8

**Duration:**  
1-2 Weeks

### Standards Groups & Applicable Standards

#### Reading

Literature: Key Ideas and Details  
Info. Texts: Key Ideas and Details  
Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas  
Info. Texts: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

#### Writing

Text Type and Purpose: Opinion and Argumentation  
Production and Distribution: Organization, Development, and Style  
Research: Short Projects  
Research: Gathering Information from Print and Non-Print Sources  
Research: Drawing Evidence from Literary and Informational Texts  
Range of Writing: Extended Time Frames

#### Language

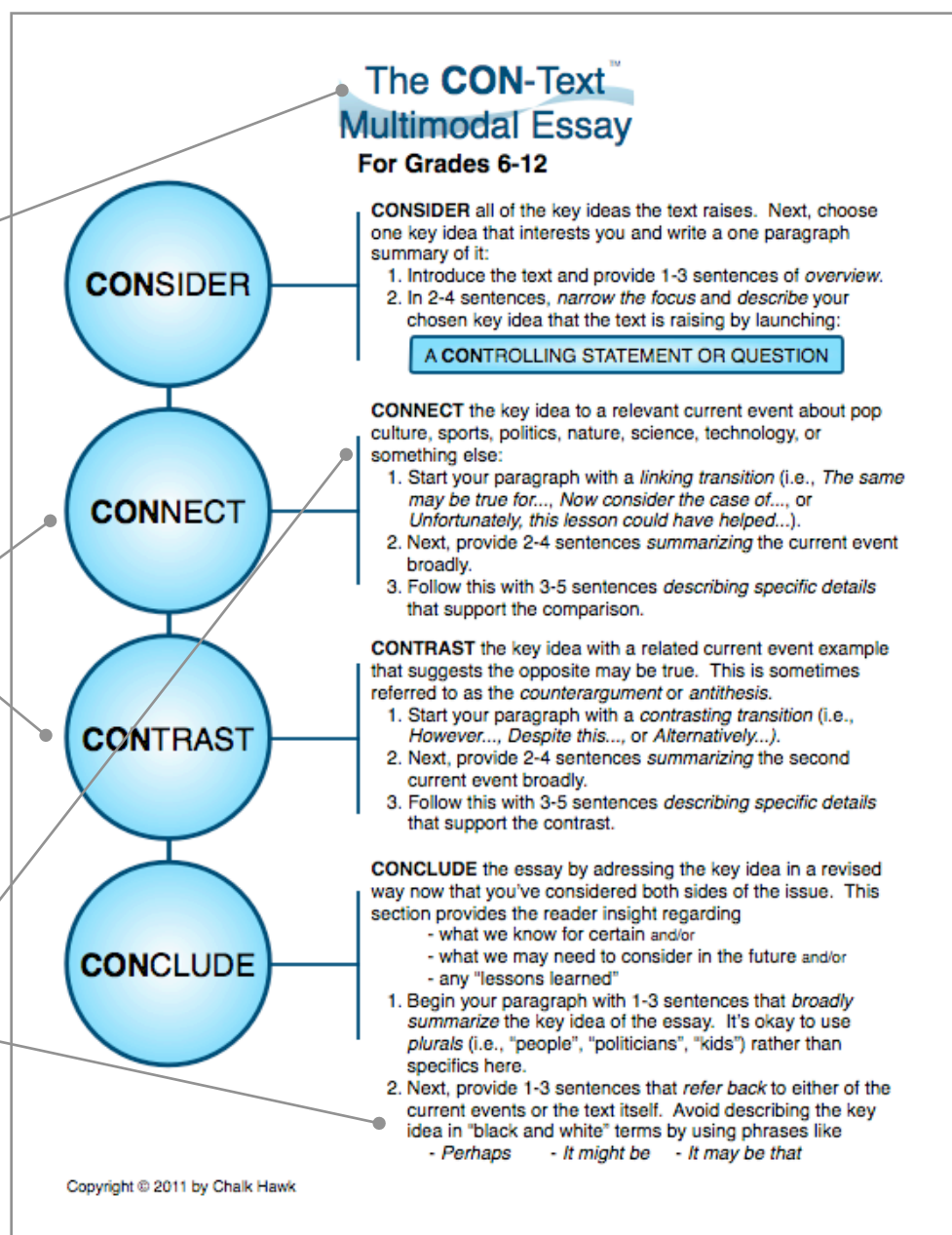
Conventions of Standard English

# Essay Template

**C.O.R.E. Element Obtainable.** Make students aware of the targeted skills and increase metacognition by framing instruction with memorable language.

**C.O.R.E. Element Current.** Encourage students to connect a class text to current events to increase engagement.

**C.O.R.E. Element Exemplar-Based.** Provide specific examples like these sentence stems to model essential skills.



# Brainstorming Template

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Current.** Incorporate contemporary issues into your classroom and challenge students to become global thinkers.

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Rigorous and Obtainable.** Seamlessly address the “Fourth R” (research)—and rigor—by explicitly scaffolding the research process.

### The CON-Text™ Multimodal Essay

Your Name:  
Title Of Text: “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost

## BRAINSTORMING A TOPIC

Write down one **key idea or question** the text raises:

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES BANK**

safety	technology	nature	aging
gender	nature	adolescence	health
education	religion	law	communication
community	violence	economy	internet
parenting	food	agriculture	labor
immigration	government	entertainment	leisure
travel	consumerism	democracy	politics

(Feel free to come up with your own, as well)

Choose one of the **contemporary issues** above and explain its connection to the key idea or question:

**Who** does this affect (*politicians, teens, the poor, etc.*)?

**What** effect(s) might this cause (*increase in/change in/rise in/shift in/creation of/destruction of, etc.*)?

**Where** might this/these effect(s) take place (*schools, cities, Mexico, concerts, etc.*)?

**Now use the information above to search for a relevant current event. Turn your answers into keywords for search engines.**

Notes from research thread #1:	Notes from research thread #2:	Notes from research thread #3:

Copyright © 2011 by Chalk Hawk  
For Grades 6-12



# Annotated Essay

**C.O.R.E. Element Exemplar-Based.** Demystify the learning process by providing models of the products the students are to produce.

**C.O.R.E. Element Current.** Allow students to write about topics that are of high interest.

**C.O.R.E. Element Exemplar-Based.** Make students aware of how the exemplar demonstrates the essential skills and concepts.

## The CON-Text™ Multimodal Essay

Exemplar Text: "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost  
Grade Level: 7-8

### ● Forging A Path of Your Own

Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken", is about what happens when a person decides not to follow the path that most people take and go his or her own way instead. This key idea is told through a metaphor. The speaker, having to decide between taking two separate paths in the woods, chooses to walk down the road where less travelers have gone. At the end of the poem, he decides that going that special way "has made all the difference."

It's too bad that teen pop star Miley Cyrus didn't do the same thing. Last summer, at the Teen Choice Awards concert, the sixteen-year-old shocked fans by performing a pole dance when she sang "Party in the USA". Like so many female teen pop stars that became famous before she did (Brittany Spears and Lindsay Lohan, for example), Cyrus decided to connect with her audience sexually rather than musically. It's too bad. She is a talented singer and dancer who doesn't need to act that way in order to be popular.

However, not all teen female pop stars have done what the others have. For example, country pop star LeAnn Rimes started her career at the age of thirteen, and won many awards for her talent, including two Grammys and a Country Music Award. She let her audience enjoy her amazing singing ability rather than showing off her body. In addition, she has raised a lot of money for charities for skin disorders and cancer. Overall, she is a role model for teen girls across the country.

Feeling pressure to do what others have done before you is part of life. Pop stars, especially teen pop stars, make a lot of money and feel pressured to entertain audiences and make headlines. However, some times this pressure leads to bad decisions. Maybe if Miley Cyrus and others like her decided to go be themselves and stick to their talents, more teens across the country would do the same thing.

CONSIDER

CONNECT

CONTRAST

CONCLUDE

Copyright © 2011 by Chalk Hawk

# Featured Sample #2

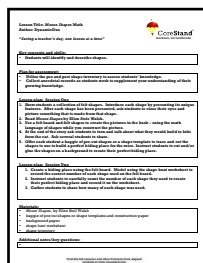
## Featured Publisher: DynamicDuo

First grade teacher Lara Galicia and second grade teacher Frances Collins make up the DynamicDuo. Teaching elementary school in a Chicago suburb by day and contributing to CoreStand by night, these two have made it their mission to eradicate the time-wasting search for classroom materials that align with the Common Core standards. They hope that, in providing these materials, teachers will fearlessly enter their classrooms armed with the necessary tools to provide engaging and relevant lessons. Their mission is to "save a teacher's day, one lesson at a time", and they reach for their trusty superhero tool belts to do just that. These belts are equipped with developmentally appropriate practices, lessons that emphasize hands-on learning, and the belief that every child is a reader, a writer, and a scholar.



## Featured Material: Mouse Shapes Math

As the title of this featured material suggests, what distinguishes the work of the Dynamic Duo is their ability to create learning experiences that draw from multiple content areas seamlessly. In this hands-on lesson, elementary students practice recognizing, discussing, and manipulating geometric shapes in a modeled and scaffolded learning environment. Best of all, students are fully engaged in the learning process because the lesson is centered around a fun children's book authored by Ellen Stoll Walsh. Thus, learning becomes a process of inquiry and discovery, and students practice mastering essential skills while having fun doing so.



## Core Standards Alignment

**Instructional Material Type:**  
Unit Plan

**Subject & Target Grade:**  
1-2, E/LA & Math

**Duration:**  
Two Sessions

### Standards Groups & Applicable Standards

#### Reading

Literature: Key Ideas and Details  
Info. Texts: Key Ideas and Details  
Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas  
Info. Texts: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

#### Writing

Text Type and Purpose: Opinion and Argumentation  
Production and Distribution: Organization, Development, and Style  
Research: Short Projects  
Research: Gathering Information from Print and Non-Print Sources  
Research: Drawing Evidence from Literary and Informational Texts  
Range of Writing: Extended Time Frames

#### Language

Conventions of Standard English



# Lesson Plan

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Obtainable.** Gather data—whether formally or informally—to assess student knowledge and build differentiation into future lessons.

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Exemplar-Based.** Set clear expectations and model essential skills concretely by building the demonstrate-process-practice sequence into learning activities.

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Rigorous.** Keep students at the center of the learning process by making learning as hands-on as possible.

**Lesson Title:** *Mouse Shapes Math*

**Author:** DynamicDuo

*"Saving a teacher's day, one lesson at a time"*



### Key concepts and skills:

- Students will identify and describe shapes.

### Plan for assessment:

- Utilize the pre and post shape inventory to assess students' knowledge.
- Collect anecdotal records as students work to supplement your understanding of their growing knowledge.

### Lesson plan: Session One

1. Show students a collection of felt shapes. Introduce each shape by presenting its unique features. After each shape has been presented, ask students to close their eyes and picture something that is made from that shape.
2. Read *Mouse Shapes* by Ellen Stoll Walsh.
3. Use a felt board and felt shapes to create the pictures in the book – using the math language of shapes while you construct the picture.
4. At the end of the story ask students to turn and talk about what they would build to hide from the cat. Ask several students to share.
5. Offer each student a baggie of pre-cut shapes or a shape template to trace and cut the shapes to use to build a perfect hiding place for the mice. Instruct students to cut and/or glue the shapes on a background to create their perfect hiding place.

### Lesson plan: Session Two

1. Create a hiding place using the felt board. Model using the shape hunt worksheet to record the correct number of each shape used on the felt board.
2. Instruct students to carefully count the number of each shape they used to create their perfect hiding place and record it on the worksheet.
3. Gather students to share how many of each shape was used.

### Materials:

- *Mouse Shapes*, by Ellen Stoll Walsh
- baggie of pre cut shapes or shape templates and construction paper
- background paper
- shape hunt worksheet
- shape inventory

### Additional notes/key questions:

- 

Find this full resource and other Common Core aligned products at [www.corestand.com](http://www.corestand.com)

# Featured Sample #3

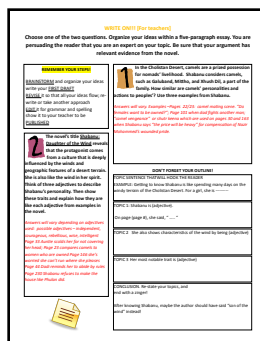
## Featured Publisher: Chau Quach

Chau Quach (M.ED) has taught in the Chicagoland area in the CPS system and the northwest suburbs for four years mostly with middle school social and language arts students. After graduating from Northwestern University (with degrees in Journalism and International Studies), she lived and worked in Japan through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. Chau is fluent in Spanish and Vietnamese, and has traveled to 14 countries, including India, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Teaching students to be creative thinkers through academic rigors within a multicultural, global classroom always has been a part of her philosophy; and she enjoys challenging young minds—anywhere from ages 8 to 18!



## Featured Material: Shabanu Write On! Unit

What makes this Shabanu Writing Unit so useful is its explicit guidance for not only students, but teachers as well. Based on a wonderful novel whose setting is Pakistan, this unit provides activities for teaching reading comprehension and essay writing. Perfect for the new teacher or the veteran teacher looking to add a contemporary piece of literature to her class, the unit includes extra copies of worksheets, activities and assignments which are annotated for the teacher and give helpful hints about what to expect from students in terms of responses and comprehension. From the peer editing rubric to the daily writing prompts to the simile practice, it's clear Chau's work is Core Standard aligned, comprehensive and engaging.



## Core Standards Alignment

**Instructional Material Type:**  
Unit Plan

**Subject & Target Grade:**  
1-2, E/LA & Math

**Duration:**  
Two Sessions

**Standards Groups & Applicable Standards**

### Reading

Literature: Key Ideas and Details  
Info. Texts: Key Ideas and Details  
Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas  
Info. Texts: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

### Writing

Text Type and Purpose: Opinion and Argumentation  
Production and Distribution: Organization, Development, and Style  
Research: Short Projects  
Research: Gathering Information from Print and Non-Print Sources  
Research: Drawing Evidence from Literary and Informational Texts  
Range of Writing: Extended Time Frames

### Language

Conventions of Standard English

# Writing Prompts

**C.O.R.E. Element Obtainable.** Build differentiation into a unit of study by including prompts of varying degrees of difficulty, as well as allowing for student choice in selecting a topic.

**C.O.R.E. Element Rigorous.** Keep students in the center of the learning process by having them reflect on content and essential skills regularly.

**C.O.R.E. Element Current.** Select content that can be readily connected to important current events like our country's relationship with Pakistan.

## DAILY WRITING PROMPTS



Teachers,

Start the lesson of Shabanu on selected days with one of the following writing prompts:

1 Shabanu is considered "Daughter of the Wind." What do you consider yourself to be? Start your paragraph with "I am the son or daughter of the \_\_\_\_\_"

2 Do you think it was brave or foolish of Shabanu to birth the baby camel from its dying mother?

3 Compare Shabanu's Sibi Fair experience to your own visit to a carnival, state fair, or amusement park. Describe your experience as though Shabanu were visiting you for the very first time.

4 What is your opinion of Sharma?

5 Shabanu really loves her camels as though they were her best friends. Do you have a pet? Do you feel the same way? If you don't have a pet, do you think Americans treat our dogs and cats the same way she did with her camels?

6 Do you think Shabanu would ever be happy with Rahim-sahib? That is, do you think that "money can buy happiness"?

7 If you had a choice, would you have married Rahim-Sahib? Or would you have tried to run away like Shabanu did?

8 Shabanu is set in an exotic location of Pakistan. However do you feel that there are similarities between her life and yours?

9 Did you enjoy the story of Shabanu? Would you recommend it to other 7<sup>th</sup> graders or other middle school students?

# Peer Editing Framework

**C.O.R.E. Element Obtainable.** Make students aware of the targeted skills and increase metacognition by framing instruction with memorable language.

**C.O.R.E. Element Exemplar-Based.** Set clear expectations and model essential skills concretely by including examples to guide student learning.

## PEER-EDITING EXERCISE: HELP A FRIEND



Help your classmate with his or her essay through peer-editing. As a pair, follow the following steps to complete revisions and editing first drafts. Follow these three tips:

1. Compliment
2. Call forth
3. Correct

1 Compliment: What did the author do well?

- ☐ Topic sentence
- ☐ Supporting details
- ☐ Word choices
- ☐ Favorite part
- ☐ Tone of voice
- ☐ Organizing the essay

2 Call forth: What can the author improve? Give suggestions.

Say: "Instead of \_\_\_\_\_, maybe you can try \_\_\_\_\_."

- ☐ Word Choice that is interesting
- ☐ Details that are concrete and let the reader see, feel, hear, touch
- ☐ Organize a sentence or paragraph in a different way to make it sound clearer
- ☐ Make the sentence longer
- ☐ Make the sentence shorter
- ☐ Focus more on your main idea

3 Corrections: Check your classmate's essay for mistakes.

- ☐ Spelling
- ☐ Missing punctuation marks
- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Run-on sentences

*\* Remember to circle, underline or use editing marks!*

# Pre-Writing Activities

**C.O.R.E. Element Exemplar-Based.** Set clear expectations and model essential skills concretely by building the demonstrate-process-practice sequence into learning activities.

**C.O.R.E. Element Obtainable.** Scaffold the learning process by building frameworks into activities which explicitly walk students through the process of creating a final product.

## WRITE ON!!! [For teachers]

Choose one of the two questions. Organize your ideas within a five-paragraph essay. You are persuading the reader that you are an expert on your topic. Be sure that your argument has relevant evidence from the novel.

### REMEMBER YOUR STEPS!

**BRAINSTORM** and organize your ideas write your **FIRST DRAFT**. **REVISE** it so that all your ideas flow; re-write or take another approach **EDIT** it for grammar and spelling show it to your teacher to be **PUBLISHED**

**2** The novel's title **Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind** reveals that the protagonist comes from a culture that is deeply influenced by the winds and geographic features of a desert terrain. She is also like the wind in her spirit. Think of three adjectives to describe Shabanu's personality. Then show these traits and explain how they are like each adjective from examples in the novel.

*Answers will vary depending on adjectives used: possible adjectives – independent, courageous, rebellious, wise, intelligent*  
*Page 33 Auntie scolds her for not covering her head; Page 23 compares camels to women who are owned Page 146 she's worried she can't run where she pleases*  
*Page 44 Dadi reminds her to abide by rules*  
*Page 230 Shabanu refuses to make the house like Phulan did.*



**1** In the Cholistan Desert, camels are a prized possession for nomads' livelihood. Shabanu considers camels, such as Galuband, Mittho, and Xhush Dil, a part of the family. How similar are camels' personalities and actions to peoples'? Use three examples from Shabanu.

*Answers will vary. Examples –Pages 22/23: camel mating scene. "Do females want to be owned?"; Page 101 when dad fights another man; "camel vengeance" or shutr keena which are used on pages 30 and 163 when Shabanu says "the price will be heavy" for compensation of Nazir Mohammed's wounded pride.*

### DON'T FORGET YOUR OUTLINE!

#### TOPIC SENTENCE THAT WILL HOOK THE READER

EXAMPLE: Getting to know Shabanu is like spending many days on the windy terrain of the Cholistan Desert. For a girl, she is -----

TOPIC 1: Shabanu is (adjective).

On page (page #), she said, " .... "

TOPIC 2 She also shows characteristics of the wind by being (adjective)

TOPIC 3 Her most notable trait is (adjective)

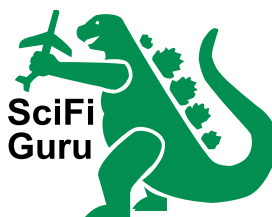
CONCLUSION. Re-state your topics, and end with a zinger!

After knowing Shabanu, maybe the author should have said "son of the wind" instead!

# Featured Sample #4

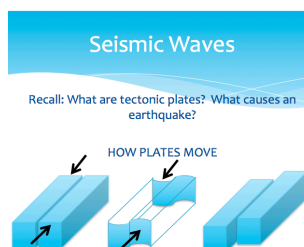
## Featured Publisher: SciFi Guru

SciFi Guru has been teaching for twenty years and has experience in public and private schools. At the core of his philosophy is a firm belief in the power of interdisciplinary learning. Thus, SciFi Guru believes that, just as English teachers should encourage their students to read informational texts with topics of a scientific nature, so, too, does the responsibility of teaching reading and writing fall across all disciplines. As such, he strives to incorporate a reading and/or writing component into each of the units he designs. Moreover, SciFi Guru knows how important it is to incorporate current events into any classroom, and strives to use scientific principals to explain breakthroughs and natural phenomena through hands-on activities.



## Featured Material: Understanding How a Tsunami Wave Forms

In this multi-period lesson plan, students will understand the science behind tsunamis and how they are formed. Critical to understanding the recent catastrophic chain of events triggered by Japan's Sendai Earthquake, students take notes from a brief presentation, connect class content to personal experiences, and conduct a group lab to observe and record how waves of varying intensity are created and draw conclusions to make real-world predictions about the nature of tsunamis. Finally, students narrate the results of the scientific procedure, form a claim about that procedure, and support the claim with logical reasoning and specific examples. As demonstrated here, SciFi's approach fits perfectly with the interdisciplinary literacy skill bands outlined by the Core Initiative.



## Core Standards Alignment

**Instructional Material Type:**  
Lesson Plan

**Subject & Target Grade:**  
6-8 Science

**Duration:**  
1-3 Days

### Standards Groups & Applicable Standards

#### Writing

Text Type and Purpose: Discipline Specific Argumentation  
Text Type and Purpose: Informative and Explanatory  
Production and Distribution: Organization, Development, and Style  
Research: Gathering Information from Print and Non-Print Sources  
Research: Drawing Evidence from Literary and Informational Texts  
Range of Writing: Shorter Time Frames

#### Language

Conventions of Standard English

# Lab Handout

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Current.** Make learning meaningful and relevant by encouraging students to connect class content to personal experiences.

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Current.** Tapping into important current events like natural disasters makes class concepts more meaningful to students.

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Obtainable.** Creating hands-on activities to demonstrate class concepts ensures the learning process is student-centered.

### Lab: How A Tsunami Forms

Date:

Class:

Period:



Lab Partners:

**Purpose:** To understand how a tsunami forms and to use scientific observation to predict which type of seismic wave creates a tsunami.

**Pre-lab Assessment:** Describe an experience you've had with a weather event or disaster such as a flood, hurricane, tornado, storm, blizzard, or drought. What happened? What actions did you and/or the people with you take? What were your primary concerns and fears at the time?

**Introduction:** Tsunamis, such as the recent one occurring off the coast of Japan, are often created by seismic waves of energy generated by earthquakes. Tsunamis are very large, powerful waves or series of waves that can travel upwards of 500 miles and hour in the deep sea. Slowing as they reach shore, the waves increase in frequency and height, and can topple entire buildings instantly. Today you will conduct an experiment where you'll observe the effects of vibrations on liquids to determine which type of seismic wave (*primary [P]*, *secondary [S]*, or *surface [L]*) creates tsunamis.

#### Materials:

paper plate  
water  
rubber mallet  
lab response write-up (this packet)

#### Procedure:

1. Carefully fill up your plate with water and place the plate in the center of the table about six inches from the front edge.
2. Next, assign one person the job of using the mallet. His/her job is to tap with medium force the table in three separate locations.
3. Assign remaining partners the job of observing the number of waves created in the plate of water, their speed and direction, and their overall size. They will record this information on page two of this lab packet.
4. Have the mallet partner tap with medium force the front edge of the table. This will mimic a *primary (P) wave*. Recording partners should record results in figure A.
5. Have the mallet partner tap with medium force the side edge of the table. This will mimic a *secondary (P) wave*. Recording partners should record results in figure B.
6. Have the mallet partner tap with medium force the top of the table near the plate. This will create a *surface (L) wave*. Recording partners should record results in figure C.
7. Repeat steps 4-6, switching mallet and recording roles as needed.



# Lab Handout

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Rigorous.** Incorporating language directly from the Core Standards ensures that students know exactly what an activity's essential skills and learning targets are.

## C.O.R.E. Element

**Obtainable.** Designing activities that appeal to multiple learning styles (using a mallet, drawing, taking notes, writing, and working in a group) ensures that all students have a greater chance for success.

**Results and Conclusions:** Tsunamis are created by whichever of the seismic waves is the most powerful. Based on your scientific observations, which seismic wave is the most powerful? On your own (not with your partners) compose a well-written formal essay here that

- a. narrates objectively what happened during the experiment
- b. delivers a thesis regarding which type of seismic wave causes a tsunami
- c. supports the thesis with logical reasoning and specific examples

**Data:** Record your observations here. Be sure to indicate number, size (s=small, m=medium, l=large), direction (with arrows) as needed.

Figure A.

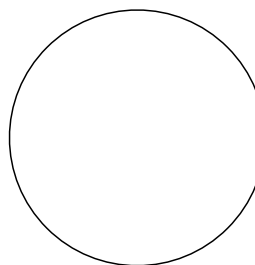


Figure B.

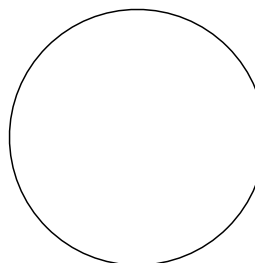
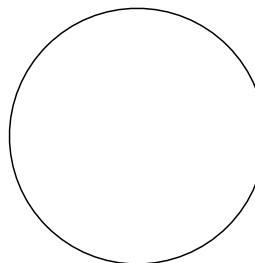


Figure C.





# The Common Core Standards are here, and here to stay.

As educators, we have a choice: to see these Standards as a threat, or to embrace this Initiative and take an active role in deciding how best to implement these standards to maximize learning in the classroom. After all, teachers are the experts—we know best how to transform standards and expectations into authentic, student-centered learning experiences. We know best how to engage the students in our classrooms and differentiate instruction so that all students succeed. Best of all, we're not in this alone: we can turn to each other for help and guidance to ensure our voices are heard and our children are served.

We hope that [corestand.com](http://corestand.com) can become a vital community where such things can happen. Join us at [corestand.com](http://corestand.com) to

- Purchase instructional materials like those highlighted in this book
- Publish and sell original instructional materials aligned to the Common Core Standards
- Showcase your professionalism and expertise to colleagues, administrators, and parents by creating a comprehensive, multimedia portfolio.
- Download free resources like this e-book to learn more about the Core Initiative and grow professionally
- Watch video tutorials
- Visit our Community blogs
- Sign up for our newsletter to receive free, weekly activities and lessons tied to current events
- Receive the latest news and updates relating to the Core Initiative
- Learn more about our School Share program, workshops, and other consulting programs we offer

Thank you for everything that you do to prepare our students for the 21st Century.

Regards,

The Team at CoreStand